

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

# Fractures (broken bones)

### What can I expect?

A broken bone is called a fracture. It may cause pain, swelling, heat and bruising. Initially, it may be difficult to put weight through the affected limb and may need an x-ray to assess the type and severity of the fracture. You may need a temporary plaster cast or a brace to help protect the bones. If bones are misaligned, you may need a doctor to put them back in place or surgery to fix the bone into place.

You can expect to see a doctor and a physiotherapist who can advise you about managing swelling and pain, issue aids and exercises to help you regain function and support you along the way, getting you back to being you.

### Healing times

#### Phase 1

The body can heal minor fractures in six to eight weeks. If the fracture is severe, it may take three to six months. The bone is remodelled by immature cells which form a callus (a type of soft bone). During this first phase it is important that you do not overload the affected limb. You may need time off work, extra support from friends/family, or mobility aids. Your healthcare professional can advise you how to function and mobilise safely.

#### Phase 2

Once new bone is laid down it begins to mature, this can take a further six to eight weeks.

During this phase your doctor or physiotherapist may advise you to gradually load the affected limb to help the bone become stronger. You may be able to return to work during this phase.

#### Phase 3

The soft tissue which surrounds the bone may take longer to heal (three to six months). So, it is important to exercise the affected limb even after the bone has healed. Your physiotherapist will gradually progress your exercises and help you to regain function.

### Complications

Sometimes complications occur which delay healing times:

- Damaged muscles, nerves, or blood vessels may impact movement, sensation, and blood supply.
- Infections can occur which may require antibiotics – signs include pain, swelling, redness, heat, and a high temperature.
- Compartment Syndrome is a rare condition which requires emergency medical attention. It is most common within the first 48 hours following a fracture and causes sudden, intense pain and swelling.

**If you suspect complications, please contact NHS 111 online or telephone 111.**

## What can I do to help?

A healthy lifestyle will help bones to heal well and will help to prevent future fractures. This includes eating a balanced diet, keeping hydrated, reducing your alcohol intake, and stopping smoking with support from the smoking cessation team.

As well as resting, it is important that you move regularly and engage with the advice issued by your doctor and physiotherapist.

## Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

## Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns, or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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